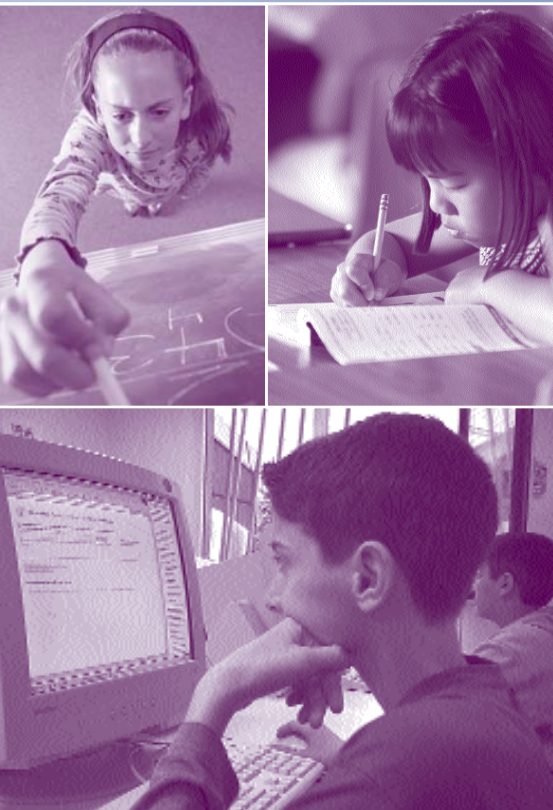


# State Representative **Jim Bottorff**



## *Session Report*



- ☒ The New State Budget
- ☒ New Voter ID Law
- ☒ Legislation Impacting Students
- ☒ Economic Development Initiatives

# INDIANA'S NEW BUDGET



## School Funding Cuts and Increased Property Taxes

**T**he new state budget that passed by a narrow margin increases property taxes and, at the same time, cuts funding for local schools. After years of bipartisan efforts to reform education and reduce property taxes, the current governor and his majority party have approved a budget that will cut state funding for many schools and raise property taxes by nearly \$850 million.

There are no minimum guarantees in state funding for schools, which means more than 140 school corporations will receive less money. Those corporations will be forced to eliminate teachers, to cut programs and to increase class sizes. Any additional funding for public schools will come primarily from raising local property taxes.

There will be reduced state support through the Property Tax Replacement Credit (PTRC), another move that will increase local property taxes. This eliminates the promise of just three years ago to provide more state support to combat rising property taxes in light of the historic and controversial statewide reassessment.

In addition, funding for the program that provides health care for the elderly, disabled and children will increase by 5 percent, although bipartisan experts have predicted a 10-percent growth. State assistance for road repairs and improvements will decrease as well.

It is a shame that the legacy of this session will be passage of a budget that turns its back on Indiana's school-children and property taxpayers. For anyone who cares about education and local taxpayers, it is indefensible.

## Voter ID—Flawed Reform Approach

**Y**ou might have heard that the General Assembly passed a partisan plan to require individuals to show photo identification in order to vote on Election Day.

Upon first glance, this sounds like a good idea. Present your driver's license and you can vote. Who couldn't meet that requirement?

People who live at nursing homes and no longer drive, for one. Women who have married and changed their names, because their driver's licenses will not match their voter registration files. Minorities who have had to face many barriers

in the past to their efforts to vote.

The idea has been sold as a way to eliminate fraud and restore honesty to the electoral process. **What advocates for the bill have failed to tell you is that this bill will surely deny some the right to vote.**

In recent years, all cases of electoral fraud in Indiana have involved absentee ballots, and this legislation fails to address that issue. As the majority party advanced this proposal, it did not provide a single instance where electoral fraud in Indiana has occurred at a polling site.

**This legislation has several major flaws, and a court challenge already has been launched to determine if it violates basic principles of the Indiana Constitution.**

The vast majority of voters have photo IDs and should be required to show them. Those who do not have photo ID should not lose the right to vote.

**Vote  
Here**



# Education Issues Update



A number of important education bills were approved this session, but I think the most important measure affecting our children was the state budget. As I discuss in greater detail elsewhere in this newsletter, the new budget will shortchange many schools and force them to eliminate programs and lay off teachers, factors that will hurt our children's ability to get a quality education.

Here are other major education measures passed in 2005:

Starting in 2010, Indiana students will have to complete the Core 40



Starting in the 2010-11 school year, students will have to complete the Core 40 curriculum in order to graduate. Core 40 requires students to receive credits in a series of advanced courses, including English and language arts, math, science, social studies and foreign languages.

Other education bills will change the enrollment date for kindergarten to August 1 from July 1, require schools to adopt rules to prohibit bullying, and provide daily opportunities for students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance and observe a moment of silence. The state Board of Education will be required to set up cheer-leading safety standards and guidelines.

## Economic Development

I believe it is the duty of the General Assembly to provide the opportunities for Indiana to create, maintain and increase good-paying jobs in growth areas of our economy. This year's legislature made economic development a priority.

In fact, the very first bill passed into law this session created a new public-private group—the Indiana Economic Development Corporation—to serve as the leader for development efforts across our state. I was especially pleased we were able to make changes to this corporation that will ensure it is accountable to the public.

Other measures designed to help spur economic growth include increasing the research and development tax credit, phasing out the sales tax on research and development equipment, and extending the life and use of EDGE tax credits that help businesses retain and create jobs.

We also passed a measure that will speed the process of obtaining permits so developers can begin construction on new industrial sites. Small business owners will receive additional tax breaks under new legislation that will also reduce the potential that they will be harmed by government regulation.

All of these reforms can help economic growth in Indiana. We must remain attuned to the opportunities in a changing environment, and I will continue to search for ways to grow our economy and increase good-paying jobs.

## Fighting Crime

It will be illegal to run an Internet Web site that is engaged in unlawful or professional gambling. Open containers of alcohol will be prohibited in cars, with violators fined up to \$500.



## Protecting Victims

Victims will be automatically notified when offenders are released from prison or have their status changed. Offenders on home detention will be ordered to wear monitoring devices that constantly track their location.

## Tracking Sex Offenders

A person convicted of possessing child pornography who has



a prior conviction for that offense will be required to register as a sex offender. The state will be allowed to seek life in prison without parole for a person who has multiple felony offenses involving sex crimes against a child.

## Alternate Fuels

Whenever possible, state government vehicles will be required to run on agriculture-based fuels, such as biodiesel, ethanol or gasohol.

## Contact

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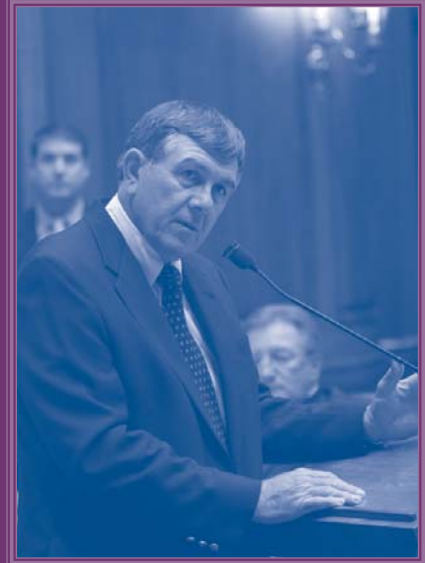
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# 2005 Session Highlights



Representatives Jim Bottorff (left, D-Jeffersonville) and Paul Robertson (D-Depauw) listen to a proposed bill.



Debating legislation, Representative Bottorff addresses the House of Representatives.

## Representative Jim Bottorff

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